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My Note Book.

Leonato.—Are these things spoken, or do I but dream?
Don John.—Sir, they are spoken, and these things are true.
 —*Much Ado About Nothing.*



GAIN, "that \$18,000 peach-blow vase!" Like Banquo's ghost, "it will not down." It, or its counterfeit presentment, has lately appeared in the collection of Mr. Brayton Ives, and as with Byron's fly in the amber, the wonder is how the deuce it got there. But *is* Mr. Ives's "peach-blow" the famous one from the Morgan sale? That gentleman himself declines to say "yea" or "nay." To do so would, of course, decrease the value of the object. A "peach-blow" vase devoid of any mystery would be worth no more than any other fine specimen of Chinese porcelain. So if Mr. Ives has, indeed, become possessed of this perennial object of discord, he naturally acquired with it the right to continue the mystification of the public. I fancy I hear some one say that the matter is no concern of the public. But that will not stand; for if this new mystery is not gotten up for the benefit of the public, for whom, then, is it?

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BUT, to return to the question whether or not the vase is the same currently believed to have been bought by Mr. Walters. There is good reason for assuming that it is *not*. It is true that it is of the same size, the same shape, and, as nearly as may be, the same color. But, as it appears in Mr. Ives's house, it is significant that it is placed on a silver stand recently made for it at Tiffany's, and not on the easily identified teak-wood stand with which the original peach-blow vase was photographed in the catalogue of the Mary J. Morgan collection. Then, where *is* the original teak-wood stand? Within a few weeks it was seen in Mr. Walters's gallery, and on it stood a beautiful little Celadon vase. But if Mr. Walters has the stand, has he not also the vase itself? I entertain very little doubt that he has. Then why does he not show it and set all this mystery at rest?

* * *

To guess at that answer one must go back to the early history of the peach-blow vase in this country, when Mr. Sutton, of the American Art Association, carried the precious little object to Mrs. Morgan, and, with his well-known cleverness, made her buy it at his own liberal valuation. His Baltimore patron, who, as the oldest American collector, is generally the first person to be shown any particularly rare specimen that comes into the market, has never, it is believed, quite forgiven the omission in this respect on Mr. Sutton's part. When the vase was offered at the sale of the Morgan estate, he probably felt that he *had* to buy it to complete his wonderful collection of the "family" to which this rare specimen belongs, and was not best pleased at the round price he probably had to pay for it. That he gave anything like \$18,000 for it, however, no one who knows him will believe. According to a Baltimore paper, so much at least he has denied. Further than this he cannot be induced to say anything for publication. I know that he has been implored by Mr. Sutton to make some statement in the matter, in order to save the reputation of the American Art Association, which must have suffered greatly from the imputation that the vase was never sold at all. He is obdurate, however. And that is not the worst of the matter for Mr. Sutton and his partners.

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I HAVE good cause to believe that the peach-blow vase in Mr. Brayton Ives's possession was sold to him recently by Mr. Sutton, who, it is said, bought it some years ago from the famous Saltings collection in London, but kept it hidden away for fear of spoiling the market by showing it too soon after the Morgan sale. Mr. Ives perhaps paid him from \$4000 to \$5000 for it. This "second Richmond in the field" Mr. Sutton had reason to hope would induce Mr. Walters to put the original peach-blow on view. But he is disappointed. It is still held back, and the new difficulty Mr. Sutton finds himself in is that he is suspected of having kept the original peach-blow all this time and of finally selling it to Mr. Ives. The latter gentleman seems to enjoy the mystery being transferred to him, and is as dumb as an oyster on the subject. The peach-blow mystery, for a little while, was a fine advertisement for the American Art Association;

but the "boom" has at last become a relentless boomerang, teaching a lesson of misdirected enterprise not to be forgotten for many years to come.

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MR. WILLIAM SCHAUS asks me to say that his Rembrandt, "Le Doreur," may be seen at his house, 30 East Thirty-eighth Street, by any reader of *The Art Amateur* who will apply for a card, and adds: "I hope that artists and art students will often avail themselves of this privilege." This generous offer will doubtless be appreciated.

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THERE has been a veritable tempest in a teapot at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Schools, apparently growing out of mutual personal antipathy of Mr. Robert Hoe, the chairman of the Museum's school committee, and Mr. J. Ward Stimson, the superintendent. As a matter of course, the latter was worsted, and he was promptly removed from the position which he has filled with much zeal since he began the organization of these schools some years ago. Mr. Reginald Cleveland Cox has been appointed to succeed him in the classes for painting and study from the antique. When he entered upon his work, he found the classes pretty well thinned out, and most of the remaining students in open rebellion, on account of the loss of their old master. But Mr. Cox is an amiable gentleman, and, with judicious firmness, no doubt will succeed in bringing order out of the present chaos. Under his management, it is to be hoped that the Metropolitan Art Museum schools may enter anew on a career of usefulness and prosperity.

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By far the most important picture sale of the season, and in some respects the most important ever held in this country, will be that of the famous collection of Mr. Albert Spencer, especially notable for the group of masterpieces by the great artists of the French school of 1830. It will take place at Chickering Hall on the evening of February 28th, and the pictures will be on exhibition at the Ortgies galleries during the preceding week. In Mr. Avery's circular he calls attention "to their perfect condition and to the fact that they will be sold in good faith." Certainly, no one who knows Mr. Spencer will question the latter statement. The sixty-eight paintings include no less than sixteen by Diaz, four by Dupré, two by Corot, two by Daubigny, seven by Rousseau, six by Millet, three by Troyon and two by Meissonier. They are nearly all well known, for Mr. Spencer has been generous in lending to exhibitions. This is his third sale. The two previous sales were for the improvement of his collection. As there can be no such reason now, and no one supposes that he needs money, there is naturally much speculation as to the cause of the coming dispersion. Assuredly, Mr. Spencer cannot hope to bring together again such an array of the masters of the "School of Barbizon" as constitute the glory of the present collection.

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THIS important sale will be followed, on March 27th and 28th, by that of the combined collections of Mr. Jordan L. Mott and Mr. Edward Kearney. Ortgies & Co. will be the auctioneers on this occasion also. There will be about one hundred and twenty pictures. Among the most notable belonging to Mr. Mott are his two Gérômes—"The Slave," shown at the last exhibition of the Union League Club—and an "Interior of a Persian Inn," with two men before a great open fireplace gorgeous with its facing of old blue tiles; "Après le Bal," by Vollon, a young gallant thrumming on a mandolin; Rosa Bonheur's "Deer in the Forest," Troyon's "Going to the Fair" (34×24), and "The Bathers" (13×8) by Diaz—the last three having been bought at the Mary J. Morgan sale for respectively \$7150, \$2550 and \$1600. There are also the Vibert, showing a young artist flirting with the pretty daughter of a fat old fellow who has fallen asleep while sitting for his portrait, which was seen last year at the Union League Club; a large sunny French landscape by Lambinet, a fine Daubigny, and two battle pieces by De Neuville and one by Detaille.

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MR. KEARNEY'S contributions to the sale include the well-known Schreyer (76×46), "Wallachian Teamster Entangled in the Marshes of the Danube," which brought \$5100 at the second John Wolfe sale and \$4900 at the E. D. Morgan sale; Madou's "Jolly Musicians"—two tipsy fellows, whose pranks are convulsing the waiter girl who is looking on—also from the E. D. Morgan

sale, where it brought \$1600; Bouguereau's "Disarming of Cupid," which, it may be remembered, was illustrated on the front page of *The Art Amateur* several years ago; the fine Troyon (which brought \$3250 at the Graves sale), showing a flock of sheep gathered about a milestone in the foreground and a girl seated by the river-bank in the middle distance; and, notably, "The Rare Vase" (32×18), by Fortuny and his pupil, Ferrandiz, which was sold at the J. Abner Harper sale, in 1880, for \$1100, and will certainly bring much more now. This latter picture shows five admiring connoisseurs, in a spacious drawing-room, grouped about an enormous Alhambra-shaped vase. The figures and the vase were painted by Fortuny.

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THE bronzes and other art objects belonging to the late Edward Matthews, which have been on exhibition at the Ortgies auction rooms, will have been sold before what I am writing will appear in print; so it is of little use my calling attention to the fact that No. 95, catalogued as "Barye bronze lion and snake," is not an original Barye, but a reproduction, the selling price of which is about \$40. An original of the same subject would be worth about \$200. The other four pieces which were in the case with it are genuine. The catalogue title, "two terra-cotta figurenes (sic) from Tanagara (sic) in Berlin Museum," to say the least, was misleading. It should have been stated plainly that they were copies. There were many really excellent objects in the "collection," including curious pieces of Oriental porcelain, and a fine Greek amphora vase in excellent condition.

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THE dealers, who were the chief buyers at the final Stevens sale in February, at Moore's auction rooms, complain bitterly of the unfairness of the announcement that it was "absolutely without reserve," with certain specified exceptions, in view of the evident "protection" of nearly every object in the rooms. Mr. Gillig, of the American Exchange in London, for whose benefit the sale took place, was present part of the time, and looked well after his "interests." A Mr. Alexander, apparently acting for him, seemed to be the principal bidder. It must be admitted, though, that, notwithstanding these complaints, some of the things went very cheap.

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IT is fitting that the interesting and valuable collection of rare laces got together by the late Mrs. Astor should find a permanent abode in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Part of them were seen about four years ago at the Bartholdi Pedestal Fund Loan Exhibition, at the Academy of Design, and illustrations of some of them have been given in *The Art Amateur*. For a museum collection, perhaps, it would be more appropriate if the laces could be shown rather as specimens of old English, French and Italian handicraft than as made-up articles of female attire; but the gift is most welcome, and the suggestion may seem captious.

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AMONG other recent bequests to the Museum, I notice mentioned in *The World*, is one by Mrs. Harriet K. Wilkes, of "a porcelain tête-à-tête set, which once belonged to Queen Elizabeth." This is interesting news, in view of the fact that porcelain was not made in Europe until centuries after the death of the Virgin Queen.

* * *

THERE was a notable exhibition of American paintings in the galleries of the New York Athletic Club, in February, none of which had been previously shown in public. George Inness, whose splendid canvases, "The Coming Storm" and "Winter (Sunset)," at the Union League Club, in January, I spoke of as among the great landscapes of this generation, again astonished his friends by his glorious "September Afternoon," with its rich tangle of fireweed in the foreground, three noble elm-trees in the middle distance, and, farther off, a cluster of white buildings glistening under a deep blue sky. Albert Ryder sent a superbly colored and almost coherent illustration of the "Temple of the Mind," according to Poe's poem. The Graces are seen driven from the building by a satyr, while Love stands by and weeps. It is a moonlight scene and blended rays of gold and silver suffuse the idyllic landscape. Frank Boggs, who has gone back to Paris after a two months' sojourn in his native land—as much as he can stand at one time—left behind him "A January Tow" in New York Harbor, with the Liberty statue in the background looking down on a puff-

ing little tug dragging along a big merchantman. F. S. Church was delightfully represented by his tall, comely "Student" in her scholar's cap and gown, with black swans by her side, and pink water-lilies to repeat the carnations of her face; and there were capital landscapes by Murphy, Ochtman, Coffin, Bruce Crane, Bolton Jones, and Frederick Kost, who—from a very few years ago imitating so cleverly his master, W. S. Macy, that one could hardly tell the work of one from the other—now has a decided style of his own, and a very good one, as was seen in his poetical "Moonrise." Charles Warren Stetson, an almost unknown man from Providence, surprised everybody by his weirdly original little canvas, "Out of Consecrated Ground," showing the hurried transportation of a bier by four cowed monks, who are seen by the dim light of the young moon and the ruddy glow of a torch held by another. Mr. Stetson's career will hereafter be watched with interest.

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THE recent death of Colonel Brasseur, one of the heroes of the Franco-Prussian war, is made the occasion, by the Paris Temps of January 24th, to refer to the splendid painting by De Neuville of the "Defence of Bourget," which is one of the best known canvases in the W. H. Vanderbilt collection. The writer says:

"It is the end of the battle that Neuville has sketched in his picture 'The Defence of Bourget.' Firing has ceased; the church is being emptied; a wounded officer comes out, carried on a litter; it is Lieutenant Grisey. To the right a disarmed commander is guarded closely; it is M. Brasseur, who offered, when the picture was painted, to pose for the artist. The latter presented his model with a photograph of the picture, which he had in his hands when he died."

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THE Union League Club's twenty-fifth anniversary was celebrated last month by unusual festivities, and at the incidental exhibition of paintings the best efforts were put forth by the new Art Committee, which consists of Messrs. Richard Butler (chairman), Edwin S. Chapin, George R. Sheldon, A. E. M. Purdy, and the artists Eastman Johnson, Thomas Hicks and R. W. Van Boskerck (secretary), each of whom was represented on the walls—the latter by "Late Afternoon at Wakefield, R. I.," a freely painted landscape in his best vein. There were also native canvases by Bierstadt, Boughton, Brown, F. E. Church, S. R. Gifford, Quartley and Wiggins; but it cannot be said that, as a whole, the American paintings made a notable display. Some of them perhaps could have been spared for the Lecture Hall to take the place there of Jean Paul Laurens's "Columbus before Isabella," which, as one of the most recent works of an artist of high reputation, and exhibited for the first time in this country, assuredly was worthy of a place in the principal gallery, where it could have been seen to advantage.

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It would be interesting if Mr. William E. Dodge Stokes, the owner of the picture, would send it some time, for exhibition, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, so that one might compare it there with Brozik's immense canvas of the same subject. The Frenchman, I fancy, would easily bear off the honors. In place of the theatrical conception of the incident, and somewhat sprawling representation of it, by the clever pupil of Munkacsy, we have the scene studiously thought out and depicted with the scholarly reserve and technical resources of a master of historical painting. Columbus, naturally, is the central figure; but it is his broad back, expressive of determined courage, that is shown through his well-worn doublet, and it is the profile of his noble features that we see. He stands indomitably before the half listless, half irritated Queen, who, perhaps hearing his seemingly wild theories for the twentieth time—and, not unpardonably, being bored thereat—is nervously grasping the gilt ball of the arm of her throne, while the willowy curve of her slight figure emphasizes the gesture of impatience.

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JULES BRETON, who the month before was seen to such advantage in "The Colza-Gatherers," formerly in the Probasco collection, was represented by the statuesque single figure of a woman "Sifting Rapeseed" (owned by Mr. H. C. Fahnestock), which as nearly approaches a Millet in quality as anything I have seen by this excellent artist; "Le Gouter" (owned by Mr. James A. Garland), a group of peasants at lunch; and by "Le Soir," that masterpiece of Breton, in the collection of Mr. Albert Spencer. When Mr. Spencer's wonderful gallery of paintings shall come to the hammer—an event that is to occur before another issue of this magazine—it will be interesting to see what price will

be paid for this remarkable canvas. Sir Donald Smith—through Mr. Watson, who, it may be remembered, in acting for him on an "unlimited order," ran foul of another Montreal collector—paid \$45,000 for the "Communiantes" at the Mary J. Morgan sale. If this was the value of that by no means extraordinary painting, what should be paid for "Le Soir," with which, really, it cannot be compared? "Le Soir" has rarely been seen outside of Mr. Spencer's house; but it is known by photographs and engravings of it. In general effect it resembles "The Colza-Gatherers." There is a level field, the time is twilight, and the day's work is about done. In the foreground tired peasants are reclining, and above them, silhouetted against the rose-tinted sky, stands the figure of a tall, well-built woman, who is stretching out her arms in getting on her jacket. To the left of the picture, in the middle distance, are seen the bent figures of several workers who are not even yet ready to quit the field, although night is falling. The subject is simple enough, but there is a charm about the depicting of it impossible to describe. Never has the feeling for the warm, genial atmosphere of a summer evening been more truthfully conveyed. Gazing at the canvas, it seems impossible that you are not actually looking across the open field and waiting for the last rays of the setting sun. It is difficult to conceive of the sturdy figures of the peasants, as seen through the soft twilight haze, as those of mere laborers. You cannot think of them as such. Indeed, you do not think of them at all. They are simply incidental to the tender beauty of this sweet pastoral scene, from which you could not well imagine them disconnected. Happy the possessor of such a picture! As a well-known connoisseur is reported to have remarked the other day concerning a very fine Corot at the American Art Galleries, "If this is the only painting you can possess it is a collection in itself. If you have other paintings, then you may regard this as the crowning glory of your collection."

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AMONG other notable pictures were three exquisite landscapes by Cazin, lent respectively by Messrs. John Knoedler, George F. Baker and George I. Seney. The last-named gentleman also lent a charming little Diaz (uncatalogued)—a luminous moonlight scene, with a marvellously receding sky—very like a Rousseau at first glance; and "Sunday Morning," a choice little example of Carl Marr, whose interiors are above everything habitable, for they are always full of atmosphere, which those by American painters very rarely are. Three Rousseaus were contributed respectively by Messrs. Seney, H. T. Chapman and C. P. Huntington. Mr. Huntington also sent the large, florid landscape he bought at the Graves sale for \$10,000 for a "Corot." Some of the most important of the figure subjects were contributed by Mrs. M. A. Osborn, who sent Munkacsy's large studio interior, with the full-length portraits of himself and his wife; "A Cavalier," a characteristic Meissonier; Bouguereau's well-known "Aurora;" "The Fortune-Teller," by Diaz; "Removing Prisoners," by De Neuville; and "The Cavalry Charge," a very spirited Detaille, showing the attack upon a French provision train by a squadron of Prussian dragoons.

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By the sudden death of A. J. H. Way, the Baltimore painter, The Art Amateur loses one of its most valued writers on practical art subjects. Last year his carefully prepared articles in this magazine on fruit painting in oils gave pleasure and valuable instruction to thousands of students, and the supplemental chapters, treating of painting fish, game and other still-life subjects—the final one appeared only last month—have attracted even more attention. The following flattering notice of the artist appeared on February 9th in The Evening Post:

"Mr. Way was celebrated both in this country and in Europe as a painter of still-life, principally of fruit and game, and was considered the finest painter of grapes living, and for a cluster of black Hamburg grapes took one of the prizes at the Centennial in 1876. A picture of a large bunch of grapes by him was considered the finest thing of its kind ever exhibited in London. Mr. Way was born in Washington, and came to Baltimore when a boy. When a young man he travelled through Europe, studying in London, Paris, Florence and Rome under celebrated teachers. His pictures have been exhibited at a number of international expositions, and in the majority of cases took prize certificates. Mr. Way was a prominent member of the Charcoal Club, and made his travels the subject of a very interesting lecture before that organization."

A study of grapes, in colors, by Mr. Way, painted for The Art Amateur, was published last October. Another of cherries will be given as a supplement next month.

A VILLAINOUSLY bad copy in oils of Alfred Frederick's picture "The Passing of Arthur," with the signature, "Ganforth," boldly written in the bottom right-hand corner, is exposed for sale opposite Denning's.

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MR. ANTHONY COMSTOCK'S discomfiture in the Philadelphia courts will be appreciated by all fair-minded persons. It appears that the agent of the Society for the Suppression of Vice obtained, at the shop of F. Weber & Co., dealers in artists' supplies, through evasion of the truth—to put it mildly—photographs of nude female models, after he had been distinctly told by the salesman that they were imported and kept for sale solely for the use of artists. On obtaining copies of the photographs, he arrested the proprietors and the salesman. But the defendants were promptly discharged by the judge, with the approval of the prosecuting attorney, and Mr. Comstock received a rebuke from the court which he ought not soon to forget.

MONTEZUMA.

THE ESCOSURA COLLECTION.

THE exhibition of the curious collection of antiques made by the painter Escosura attracted more attention in New York than any other similar sale of the season. This was due in part to the friendships which the owner had formed while on a visit to this country some years ago. This, it is to be presumed, was also the reason why the collection was brought to New York for sale; but another reason may be that it would have made much less of a sensation at the Hotel Drouot than here, if, indeed, it would have made any sensation at all in Paris. For New York, where only rich amateurs fill studios with costly bric-à-brac, more or less antique and more or less authentic, but undoubtedly picturesque, the sale was a remarkable one. It included a vast variety of objects—arms and armor, tapestries and embroideries, ivories and bronzes, furniture and paintings, old gold and silver, books, costumes and musical instruments—all selected mainly for their artistic merit and their value as "properties" to a painter of interiors.

Mr. Escosura being a Spaniard, it was to be expected that his collection would be rich in Spanish antiques. Such was the case. A considerable number of good specimens of Hispano-Moresque pottery, mostly plaques, and some with fine copper reflections, were disposed rather high upon the walls of the outer room at Bucken's gallery, where the sale is to be held. Several were evidently mended, and, knowing the difficulty of obtaining good unbroken specimens, and the fact that to an artist a mended plaque is practically as useful as a whole one, amateurs will be shy of bidding for them. It should, however, be known that even fragments of this ware are of value. The decorations in most cases were animals, inscriptions, and very free and rude arabesques.

Much of the goldsmith's work was made for ecclesiastical use. A large Gothic custode, or monstrance, had evidently been patched up from an old chalice which was used as base and the open-work top of a monstrance of which the base had been lost. Of the works intended for profane use, one of the handsomest was a jewel casket in silver repoussé with tourelles at the angles, all four sides being formed by plaques with figures in relief and the cover surmounted by a little statuette of Diana seated. There were several curious pieces of jewelry, including some with enamelled settings, and some fine pieces of rock crystal, carved and engraved. Of tapestries there were several pieces of no great size but of striking Gothic design. The collection of stuffs and embroideries was very large, and included many valuable specimens of old cut velvet, silver and gold brocade, church embroideries and the like. Many costumes of the eighteenth century and earlier dates had doubtless served to clothe Mr. Escosura's models. Among the furniture, a small fauteuil for a child, of carved and gilded wood, with pink velvet cushion, and a small pair of bellows of buhl-work, catalogued as "carved wood," attracted attention.

Among a number of paintings "by the old masters" there were some of remarkable merit. The catalogue states that the owner vouches for the authenticity of these paintings, which include a "St. George and the Dragon," attributed to Raphael, a "Young Girl," by Velasquez, and a beautiful head of a Madonna, ascribed to Leonardo da Vinci. The collection certainly includes several very interesting specimens of various old schools, particularly of the Spanish and Dutch. A number of the artist's own pictures, such as used to find a good market in this country, were also put on exhibition.